

ROCKLIN UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT - SPECIAL NEEDS (March 2003)

The Rocklin Unified School District provides services through a partnership with the City of Rocklin, for both typically developing children and children with special needs in an inclusive developmentally appropriate pre-school program. The anticipated outcomes are:

- The parent support system for children with special needs will be enhanced
- Children involved in the program will be achieving appropriate developmental milestones in a fully inclusive setting,
- Children will enhance their ability to be ready to succeed in kindergarten
- Mutual benefits and awareness will occur for both the special needs children and typically developed children involved in the program.

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Some surprises/implications from the program are the combination of special education and regular education children on a mainstream school campus has created new opportunities for the school to develop as a community, and it has opened more doors for special needs kids.

- Staff is seeing lots of peer participation where all children make friends and join in activities.
- How well and fast the special education and regular education children blended.
- Parents for the typically developing children were okay with their kids' participation in the combined classroom program.
- Children came to the program with a variety of needs beyond the expected "speech and language" disabilities.

An implication is that there has been a huge increase in referrals and early identification of autism, medically involved disabilities, and sensory issues. Children with autism are appearing with much higher frequency than in past years.

Parents are requesting that their kids participate in the inclusive program, both for the extra attention their children receive, and because it is locally based and close to home.

Other findings from the program:

- Having specialists from many different backgrounds has promoted cross training and crossover learning, and increased the staff skills set.
- The program has developed a better "assessment of skill" instrument, based on indicators drawn from many other instruments.
- Referrals come almost equally from other agencies within the system and from parents.
- This year more than seventy children have participated in the program.
- A new practice model is emerging, based on children participating in a combination of in-home and classroom services.
- Having children from broader age ranges has created bridges and linkages to reach children earlier.
- The infant programs alert the district to incoming children.

- The age at first contact has dropped from thirty months to as young as sixteen months, creating opportunities for district staff to plan future program needs.
- Parents are better informed.
- Children are exposed to kids with many different disabilities as well as to non-disabled children.

The comfort level of Rocklin program staff is higher than anticipated with staff working together, developing relationships, planning together, and supporting one another. This is a new partnership between RUSD and the City of Rocklin.

The program has helped avoid special education litigation providing kids with access to full-services learning environment with access to typically developing peers.

Additional opportunities and needs identified so far are that there is a huge need for parent support in all aspects of family life. The Rocklin program is considering requesting support from other CFC Partners to address family needs beyond the capacity of the Rocklin program.

- Staff is in the process of finalizing a parent satisfaction survey.
- Staff wants to enhance the home visit to develop better relationships with parents.
- Staff will compile data from the Developmental Tasks assessment sheet to conduct an aggregate computer analysis that looks at broader program issues.
- Staff will participate more in the CFC Partnership. A better communication system between the CFC and all staff involved was developed.
- There is a need to learn more about kids who can't physically produce speech ("apraxic" children). Staff needs training around this.
- The district is looking for ways to continue the subsidies for low-income families.
- The program will continue beyond the Prop. 10 grant period, regardless of funding. Staff believes they "can't go back to the way it was before."

Prop. 10 funding has served as a catalyst to create a new approach to serving special education and regular education children.